

## Tips for Parents & Warning Signs

Prevention encompasses a wide variety of both innovative and common sense strategies for those who are responsible for children and those concerned about the future of our communities

Since the Maryland Adolescent Survey, an anonymous annual assessment of drug and alcohol use among 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, consistently reveals startling trends, Prevention seeks cutting-edge approaches to reduce the prevalence and delay the onset of underage drinking and drug abuse.

### **Several Prevention tenets are universally accepted as a guide for parents and kids. Tips include:**

- Family eats frequent meals together-Middle and high school non-users were 1 ½ - 2 times more likely to eat at least one meal a day with their family as compared to those who DID use alcohol or other drugs.
- Teen feels they can talk to adult about problems- Eighth-grade non-users of alcohol were twice as likely to say that they could always talk about their problems with an adult in the family, as compared to 8<sup>th</sup> graders who DID use alcohol.
- Parent worries if teen is late from school- Sixth- grade non-users of illegal drugs were almost twice as likely to say that an adult in their family would always worry if they were late coming home from school as compared to 6<sup>th</sup> grade students who DID use illegal drugs
- Parent becomes computer savvy and frequently monitors and media including music, chat rooms, websites, TV, blogs, etc.
- Parents are aware of and shields child from domestic abuse, incest, sexual assault, parental promiscuity and exposure to other severely dysfunctional behaviors in the home & family.
- Parent has rules about people teen may associate with.
- Parent listens when teen has a problem—rather than immediately giving advice or overreacting.
- Adults teach and model strategies to relax under stress, cope with pressure and problem-solve.
- Teen knows how to provide assistance to friends who need help and obtain support for personal problems
- Adults reinforce the young person's perception that admired qualities and future aspirations are jeopardized by drugs and underage drinking.

- Teens become assertive and comfortable with selecting abstinence as a “cool” choice.
- Adults provide factual—not hysterical or exaggerated information about the negative health, legal and social consequences of using and abusing substances.
- We “normalize” youth belief systems to enforce that risky behaviors are NOT the norm even though kids often wrongly perceive that “everybody is doing it.”
- Foster self-worth and help teens make connections between their reputation and their potentially embarrassing behavior while intoxicated.
- Parent makes sure teen is awake/ready for school, dressed appropriately and eats something.
- Adults talk to kids about their short and long-term goals and specific steps to get there.
- Parents meet with the child’s teacher, school administrators and police and insist on being informed of trends in drinking and drug use or sales at school.
- Parent sets and maintains rules and follows through with predictable consequences when rules are broken and limits pushed too far
- Teens receive a clear message that family and friends disapprove of substance use- 8th grade non-users were two to three times as likely to have someone at home who talks to them about NOT using alcohol or other drugs
- Parents & Teens role-play and practice ways to resist social pressure to use.
- Insist that your teen join in family activities and traditions—Do fun things together, not just chores and errands, even when the teen aren’t enthusiastic!

**Prevention also builds awareness of basic brain chemistry to promote alternative activities that actually mimic and produce “natural highs” and help achieve desirable emotional states such as fun, excitement and belonging without substances.**



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